

5 ways tourism businesses can attract more local travellers

Easter is fast approaching, and while this season is known for pickled fish, hot cross buns and easter eggs, it is also the first peak travel season of the year. During this time, South Africans tend to make their way back to their hometowns to reconnect and relax with friends and family, says Mashoto Mokgethi, head of domestic tourism for South African Tourism. "A lot of these hometowns have some of South Africa's most enchanting hidden gems presenting a significant opportunity for tourism businesses to tap into the peak travel season market and wow locals with amazing offerings."



Source: Supplied

"Sho't Left is encouraging South Africans to explore the country and set their tables anywhere this Easter holiday and not feel restricted to their home dining tables. Tables are central to everything we do - whether you're in a meeting or simply having lunch at your desk. Tables bring people together and foster a sense of community and belonging. With over 500 small towns, Mzansi travellers have an endless catalogue of accessible and affordable unique locations and experiences to choose from to set their tables.

"South Africans deserve to be rewarded with good experiences (even when it's close to home) and small-town tourist partners must make sure their offerings stand out," says Mokgethi.

Below, Mokgethi shares five ways tourism businesses can attract more local travellers this Easter holiday.

1. Create local packages

One of the most effective ways to attract local travellers and residents is to create packages that cater specifically to them. We all know that South Africans love a good deal and Sho't Left is known for those, this opens opportunities for businesses in small towns to load their deals for customers to find and explore. A top tip for small tourism businesses is to make sure their packages include discounted rates as well as unique experiences designed to appeal to consumers' interests and preferences.

This could be anything from hot air ballooning to a township tour, an afternoon of wine tasting, or a quad-biking adventure through the fields – the land around you is your canvas and you are the artist.

For example, a wildlife lodge could offer a package with a guided bush walk, a local cooking class, and a visit to a nearby cultural village. Since South Africans travel with family during the Easter break, having a family package that includes fun activities for the kids and adults without breaking the bank is a great way to attract local visitors.

2. Partner with local businesses

Partnering with other local businesses to attract local travellers and residents to your tourist business can be a beneficial business move. This could include restaurants, craft markets, and other tourist attractions in the area.

Teamwork makes the dream work, so find partners that connect and have a hometown appeal for more comprehensive and attractive offerings for visitors by working together. For example, a winery could partner with a local restaurant to offer a wine and food pairing experience.

3. Showcase local culture

Small towns are usually rooted in culture and tradition, and many local travellers and residents are looking for authentic experiences that showcase the culture and traditions of the area. Tourism partners can incorporate local culture into their offerings. This could include traditional dances, music, art, and visits to local cultural sites and museums.

4. Engage with the local community

Another way your tourist business can attract more local travellers and residents is by engaging with the local community.

This could include hiring staff from the local area, sourcing products and services from local businesses, and supporting local charities and initiatives. You can build trust and loyalty among local travellers and residents by demonstrating your commitment to their home.

5. Market your packages

This is a critical tip. Make sure travellers know about your deals, discounts, and packages. Upload packages to tourism platforms such as www.shotleft.co.za and advertise them on social media to raise awareness. And don't forget to engage with your potential visitors on social media, because that is the ultimate word of mouth in a digital world.